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The Athenian Mercury.

Tuesday, *February* 12. 1695.

Queſt. 1. *BEing formerly a great taker of* Tobacco, *but often perſwaded by ſome friends that 'twas of no real advantage to any man, but chiefly maintain'd by cuſtom; and ſome Ladies being averſe to it whom I have a particular reſpect for, I am willing to leave it, tho I know it won't be without ſome difficulty, and have promiſed them ſo to do, if you believe it prejudicial, and will honour me with your opinion; to which I deſire may be added the manner of its growth, and its reſpective virtues, if it has any?*

Anſw. This weed often grows a yard and half high, with a ſtraight thick ſtalk, which emits ſeveral branches, with many long and broad Leaves on them, that are rough, of a pale-green, unpleaſant ſmell and bitter taſt. Some tell us it has many good effects when applyed to the body, as the Leaf warm'd and laid to the head has often cured the head-ach when it has proceeded from colds or wind; And is uſed for the Cramp, and ſuch like pains coming from the ſame cold humours, and eſpecially it cures hollow teeth if fill'd with the Leaf bruiſed. It's decoction in fair water is likewiſe good for colds in the breaſt, and old Coughs, by removing the flegm which cauſes them. It's ſmoak taken through the Noſe and ſwallow'd down, has cured ſuch as have had Ulcers in their Lungs, by the ſame reaſon that *Galen* tells us he knew a baker's wife cured of that diſtemper by frequent breathing the hot and dry air which ſhe received as ſhe put her bread into the Oven and took it out again. The leaves roaſted are good for the Wind-Colick. The *Indians* give it their children for the worms. The ſmoak blown into the Noſtrils recovers ſwooning fits; ſcurf, itch, chilblanes, and kib'd heels are cured by being rub'd with it; as alſo venomous wounds, which the *Spaniards* experienced when they aſſaulted the *Indians* who wounded them with poiſon'd arrows, having at laſt found out that the Juice of *Tobacco* wrought the ſame cure, as their prepared Sublimate had done before it was ſpent. The *Indian* Prieſts obſerving all theſe vertues transferr'd them to the myſteries of their Religion; for when they are conſulted, about the events of war, they ſuck the ſmoak of this herb through long canes till they fall aſleep, and being afterwards awaken'd, relate wonders to their auditors, telling them they have had divine dreams. They alſo uſe it to recover wearineſs and ſupport hunger, ſo that by their preparations, they can take away the inconveniencies of hunger and thirſt for two or three days together. But the taking it as 'tis commonly uſed, is very prejudicial to moſt young men, and chiefly to the cholerick, it being hot and dry in a high degree; 'Tis alſo certain that the ſmoak of it is bad for the brain, which it clouds and dulls by ſtirring up the Animal ſpirits.

Queſt. 2. *What does the word* Manna *ſignify and in what places is it to be found?*

Anſw. In *Hebrew* and *Arabick* the word ſignifies a thick dew, ſweet and whitiſh, which in *Paleſtine* and the Neighbouring countries ſticks upon the Leaves of certain trees where it congeals and hardens to the conſiſtence we ſee it. Some of it is alſo found in *Calabria*. The antient *Greeks* had only a confuſed knowledge of this kind of dew, and have not mentioned it under the name of *Manna*, but a ſort of *Hony*. Altho 'tis true they made uſe of the word *Manna*, μάννα, but it ſignified *grains of incenſe*, which was quite another thing.

Queſt. 3. *Whether did* Mr. Baxter, *by his much writing promote the eſteem of the Chriſtian Religion amongſt the more diſcerning people; the affirmative being aſſerted by ſuch who deſire your Opinion?*

Anſw. Tho he was a very good man, and no doubt all his diſcourſes were well deſign'd, yet had he writ leſs, he had neither done himſelf nor the world any injury: The firſt, becauſe there's ſo many contradictions in his writings; and the laſt, ſince ſome few of his books were ſufficient for the inſtruction of ſuch perſons as they were deſigned for. And therefore not the multiplicity of his books but the goodneſs of his life was moſt probable to create an eſteem and veneration for that holy religion he profeſt.

Queſt. 4. *I have read ſome pretty, but imperfect Relations about the birth of* Sommonocodom, *the* Siamites *God; of which, if you pleaſe, I deſire a fuller account from you, having been told, the ſtory bears a near reſemblance to the Hiſtory of our Saviour, and that 'tis probable they have taken it from thence.*

Anſw. The *Siamites* ſay, That a little above Two Thouſand Years ago, a young maid retired from the World into a Forreſt of *Siam*, that ſhe might lead a more holy Life, there waiting for the coming of God. She lived in this Solitude for a long time, after a very auſtere manner, without having any Commerce with mankind: And one day, whilſt ſhe was at Prayers, ſhe conceived after a very miraculous manner, ſtill continuing a Virgin. But though this young Damſel was very well aſſur'd of her Vertue, yet being ſomething aſhamed, ſhe hid her ſelf further in the Forreſt, the more ſecurely to keep her from the Eyes of all the World; and at laſt arriving at a great Lake between *Siam* and *Cambai*, ſhe was delivered of a Child, without any pain, which Infant was very beautiful. And having no milk to nouriſh it with, not being able to reſolve to ſee it die, ſhe went into the Lake, and laid it upon ſome Leaves of an Herb, which ſwam upon the Surface of the Water, that Nature had there provided for the preſervation of this Child, after a very ſurpriſing manner. His Mother having laid him upon a Flower of this Herb, the Flower extended it ſelf to receive him, after ſuch a manner, that it covered him like a Cradle; after which, this Virgin withdrew her ſelf, and was caught up into Heaven. An Holy Hermit who had been a witneſs of all thoſe Wonders at the ſame time enter'd into the Lake, from whence he drew this Child, and took care of its Nouriſhment. This Miraculous Birth was ſoon ſpread abroad; and ſome Kings being Alarm'd to hear that the King of Kings was Born, a long time ſought him to put him to Death. But the Hermit flying with the Child, and hiding himſelf in a Deſart, he delivered it from the fury of theſe Princes. At twelve years of Age *Sommonocodom* left this Deſart and return'd to *Siam*, where he performed a great many Miracles.

Queſt. 5.

Queſt. 5. *I am adviſed by a friend to marry a broken merchant's daughter who will drink until ſhe is drunk and lye out all night; but by her mother's report will have four thouſand pounds beſides a great many Jewels which will amount to as much more. Therefore I would deſire your opinion whether it is not much better for me, to marry a Gentlewoman of mean fortune and good report, before the other with all her money and bad Qualities. No more, but that I rely upon your Judgments, which until I hear I ſhall continue unreſolved I ſpou'd not be ſo impertinent as to haſten you, but that I know you are friends to the fair ſex, and whilſt I live unmarryed, you'll deprive ſome one of 'em of a very great bleſſing; for having been acquainted with my ſelf near five and twenty years, I am well aſſured I have all the neceſſary qualities of a good husband.*

Anſw. We wiſh 'em ſo well, and know how much that rare thing is wanting, that were't in our power we'd make as many like what you pretend to, as might anſwer the number of all the deſerving fair ones. But ſince at preſent we have only you to beſtow, we are willing to give you to the beſt, which will be to the good woman, altho her purſe be lighteſt.

Queſt. 6. *Since the heathens have ſpoke many things of* Bacchus *which agree with* Moſes, *might not he be the perſon meant by his Character?*

Anſw. The *Phenicians* and *Egyptians* were too great enemies to *Moſes* to adore him under the name of *Bacchus*, and place him amongſt the number of their Gods; altho 'tis very like that thoſe who invented the fable of *Bacchus*, have ſtole from and corrupted the Hiſtory of *Moſes*, and thence have drawn the miracles of this falſe divinity.

Queſt. 7. *With juſt grief and concernedneſs of mind I renew my requeſt to you. You have been often and as earneſtly ſollicited to reſolve that queſtion ſent from a young Lady, whoſe misfortune it was ſometime ago to contract herſelf to a Gentleman after the moſt ſolemn manner, contrary to the will of her parents; ſhe is at length ſenſible of her fault, and willing to comply with 'em in marrying another; the firſt refuſes to releaſe her; this was the ſubſtance of the queſtion. Now Q. whether ſhe may without the conſent of the former complie with her parents in the ſecond overture? The thing is real and the Lady under no ordinary troubles, therefore your ſpeedy reſolution of the point is humbly deſired.*

Anſw. If the parents diſallowed of the engagement as ſoon as they heard of it, 'twas in their power to make it void, but if they knew it and continued ſilent, 'twas a tacit conſent, which they cou'd not afterwards honourably or honeſtly recal. Yet tho the power of parents is ſo extenſive, they ought not to make a rigorous uſe of it, but comply with the inclinations of their children when they are not placed to their own ruine; becauſe 'tis they who muſt be happy or miſerable by the choice. They are commanded not to be bitter againſt them; and in this caſe of marriage parents ought particularly to be tender, ſince there are dayly ſo many bad conſequences of forc'd matches.

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